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NATIONAL BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS @

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Office of the President

February 9, 1976

Joshua Lederberg, Ph.D.
Professor and Chairman
Department of Genetics
Stanford University
School of Medicine
Stanford, CA 94305

Dear Josh:

I wanted to get back to you with a follow-up on our conversation during my recent visit to Stanford.

I have rather superficially explored National Board exam content with the experts in our Undergraduate Medical Evaluation Department. Each of the test committees, made up of medical school faculty members, has a category outline that is publicized. I note that five of our Part I (basic science) committees and two of our Part II (clinical science) committees include the word "genetics" within one or another entries in their category outlines. These include anatomy, behavioral sciences, microbiology, pathology, pharmacology, and in Part II, obstetrics/gynecology and pediatrics. Dr. Bill Kennedy, who keeps himself well up on material which goes into our examinations, pointed out to me that material on genetics also can be found in medicine, preventive medicine and public health, psychiatry and even surgery, despite the fact that "genetics" does not appear in their outlines. Dr. Kennedy put a tag "genetics" on questions in the last eight Part II examinations and found an average of 92 questions per examination (about 10 percent). The extremes vary from 64 in one examination to 117 in another. Dr. Kennedy pointed out to me that this does not mean that each of these test items was primarily one on genetics. In some it was, but in others the relationship was more distant. In the last ten Part I examinations, an average of 35 items received "genetics" as the location tag, the extremes being 25 and 53. In the Part I analysis, each item is given a single classification whereas in Part II examinations, a question may be classified under more than one category. As we develop our Computerized Test Item Library system with

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its various dictionary systems, it is going to be much easier for us to answer with great accuracy questions on test content, not only by discipline but by other tags such as location, disease state, process, etc. Dr. Kennedy plans to discuss the whole genetics question with the Part I Test Committee Chairmen when they meet in February and we shall meanwhile place the names you gave me among nominees for test committee membership as positions become available.

I did appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about this and hope that the above comments are not too confusing. I look forward to seeing you again on some future visit to Stanford. Until then, please accept my very best regards.

Sincerely yours,



Robert A. Chase, M.D.
President and Director

RAC:kh